

1965 WAR

# Scouts & Rifles in 1965 War

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Tochi, Khyber, Mahsud,  
Chitral

**Aamir Cheema**

**[Pick the date]**

Role of Frontier Corps in 1965 War mainly revolves around the action of Tochi Scouts. There were events taking place in Tochi Valley which were also important.



## **1965-Year to Remember**

1965 will always go down in the history of Pakistan, Pakistan Armed Forces, in the perspective of sub-continent history. Pakistan and Pakistan Army challenged the right of hegemony to the sub-continent by virtue of its millennium old history in which Indus Valley had always remained the masters of the sub continent. Chain of events started From April 1965 onwards from the Rann of Kutch and by August 1965 Pakistan in a masterly move invoked Kashmir into the liberation war. ‘Operation Gibraltar’ in August 1965 followed by ‘Operation Grand Slam’ (1-5 September 1965) which led to the ‘September War 1965’.<sup>1</sup> This military activities remained focus on the Kasur- Lahore- Sialkot- Gujrat-Lipa areas.

In February 1965, Lieutenant Colonel (PA 1769) Muhammad Aslam took over the command of Tochi Scouts, he is a landmark in many aspects. He was the first Commandant who was qualified from Pakistan Staff College.

Captain Rahim Baksh Nasar a gunner was the longest serving officer having joined Tochi Scouts in 1962 and remained as artillery/ signal officer till 1966.

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*ShaukatRizaThe Pakistan Army War 1965, ( Army Education Press, Rawalpindi, 1984)pp. 77 - 132*

Major Ahmad Khan was commanding the No.1 Wing, Major Mahboob Shah was commanding the No.2 Wing since February 1964, Major Habibullah Khan Bazai was in command of No.3 Wing since November 1964. Major Khizar Hayat Awan was commanding the No.4 Wing at Thall Scouts. Major HidayatUllah Khan was another field officer who joined Tochi Scouts in April 1965. Even the wing second in commands (Captains) were all new, in the first quarter no less than seven officers were reverted back to army and fresh faces were posted in; there was no old hand of frontier warfare present in the Tochi Scouts.

### **Raising of No.5 Wing**

On 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1965, Headquarters Frontier Corps authorised the raising of a new wing, No.5 Wing (No.4 Wing of Tochi Scouts had been the nucleus of Thall Scouts, thus continuity was retained). The Wing was not raised rather it was formed from the existing establishment of the Tochi Scouts. It had strength of 700 all ranks.

### **Subedar Nazarband Shah**

In June 1965 when the Indians had launched 'Operation Ablaze' and all attention was on the eastern borders another incident took place at Tochi Valley. Both acts are not interlinked but the events at Tochi Valley if allowed to go out of hand would have had disastrous

impact on the overall picture, as they used to have it from 1915-1919 & again in 1936,

Mullah Dindar by the end of 1964 had emerged as a strong man of the Tochi Valley; his general reputation was 'good' among the tribes and was taken as the successor of Fakir of Ipi. He was given the title of Mujahaid-e- Shariah. 'His ambitions have been given impetus by the Afghan agents and other hostile elements in the area, his position is being exploited... thus coaxing (him) and sometimes threatening him to start his activities lest he loses his title'.<sup>2</sup>

Mullah was countered by the political agent by forming a committee of six ulemas of the agency to tour the Tochi Valley delivering Friday Sermon and countering Mullah Dindar. These six mullahs formed a Majlis-i-Shura. The issues were minor and of theological debate rather than something as strong as the British Raj or the non Muslim officers being present in the area. It was a preference of Riway against the self interpretation of the Islam by the Mullah; in Riway there is no mercy for an enemy where as the Shariah is full of mercy, in Shariah there is portion of inheritance for the girl also but in Riway it is absence. In Tochi Valley the sectarianism was not the issue as all the inhabitants were

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*Political Agents Dr Humayun C.S.P's remarks in Border & Administrative report 1964. Miran Shah Archives.*

adherent of Sunni sect, within which the Wahhabi sect of Saudi Arabia became more prominent; that was the impact of King Saud's visit in 1954 in Tochi Valley. Upper Tochi Valley was more inclined towards the Wahhabi than the lower valley. Majlis-i-Shura's efforts resulted in the flag of Mullah Dindar being stolen from Tappi Village.

Malik Niaz Ali Khan was the other war lord of the Tochi Valley; he had a lashkar of around 500 with him. Niaz was a complex character he was playing a double game, getting money and privileges for him and his followers from both Afghan Government & North Waziristan Political Agent. He had a style; buglers used to march in front of the lashkar announcing their arrival, Malik Niaz was always properly escorted, he was the political rebel echoing Pakhtoonistan where as Mullah Dindar was the religious fire brand and by 1965 both had joined hands, Tochi Valley was ripe for another season of campaign.

## **Boya**

In June 1965 the flag issue became serious with Mullah Dindar supported by Afghan Agents marching towards the MiranShah, he was joined by the Malik Niaz 'Lashkar playing the Dhols marched towards the destination, passing along the Boya Fort...On reaching

near the Boya Post the tribal did not stop but tried to overrun the post'.<sup>3</sup>

The things started simmering in June 1965 when on the very first Friday sermon the call for Jihad was given by the Mullah Dindar and his followers pressed the other mosques to follow the suit. Kanirogha, Mamirogha, Dosalli, Muskakki, Biche Kashkai, Asad Khel, Razani and Manzer Khel, Wuzzi Khel and Zindai's mosques all gave call for Jihad. There was another background to this episode. In 1963, the dispute between the Mahsud and Uthmanzais Wazirs over lands in Razmak and Shawal reached a deadlock with a tribal war among them almost inevitable. Utmanzai gathered at Razmak in strength and also at Shawal. In the end Mahsuds reluctantly accepted the Jirga's decision to solve the matter according to Shariah. Pir of Karbogha gave the verdict which was accepted by both parties. Mahsuds surrendered all land lying north of Shora Algad but will continue holding land in South, but both clans were allowed to share the water of Shora Algad. These were interim steps and it was decided that in July 1964 these will be again reconsidered in light of shariah. This is another insight into tribal way of settling the differences, both tribes also agreed to maintain peace and

not to resort to firing on this score or any other till July 1964, defaulter to pay rupees 20,000/. ‘However it seems that Mahsuds are not very keen/willing to have this dispute settled/or referred to shariah. Their efforts have always been to delay and prolong it which process they feel is advantageous to them’.<sup>4</sup> In another move the political agent started a rural works programme scheme out of development funds. Maccha Madda Khel tribe broke ‘Tinga’<sup>5</sup> from Madda Khel and asked for an irrigation scheme in their area. At Pai Khel (another Wazir clan) 400 acres of barren land was made fertile.

Malik Jahantab now over eighty years old recalls *‘the Jirga was called upon and it was decided to support the Mullah Dindar from every house the riflemen were called upon to join, I myself was part of it, we walked towards the Degan and joined Dindar’s Lashkar, the food was taken among the tribesmen and not collectively, the villagers would arrange the food which consisted of nothing but bread. We all had around 100 rounds each with us and rest we were sure to fill the deficiency through loot of the scouts armoury. To me and I think it stands good for all others there was nothing new in this affair rather just a part of our life this was*

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*Political Agent’s remarks North Waziristan Agency, January 1964.*

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*Tribal bond between the sub – clans, to act collectively.*



*my first outing with lashkar and as such I was excited and keen to leave my mark. Among the young tribesmen there was nothing more illustrious and honourable than to take part in warfare. We took position on the river side which is northern edge of the fort almost hundred meters away. Denying the water to the scouts was the part of our strategy. No one teaches us but it is through the logic and common sense that these fundamentals of warfare are understood. I had my position behind a Pawani the wild growth in the area also there was stone cover; I dug the soil and lay down in ambush waiting for any scout to venture out for water. Night went by and nothing happened and neither in the day when I got up and went to little bit behind for sleep’.*

Subedar Nazarband was a tall and a muscular scout, he has been observing the change in air. Desertion of scouts in the name of religion is not something uncommon feature of frontier warfare especially when men of same tribe are standing eyeball to eyeball. The art of persuasion which is more commonly known as propaganda warfare is an integral element of tribal conflicts. The line adopted by Malik Dindar was the religion; it was an extension of Fakir of Ipi’s warfare against British. On 15<sup>th</sup> June at evening time there was a shower of rain which brought the temperature down and improved the visibility, it was the fourth day of Boya being besieged and no link with MiranShah other than the Morse Code.

On 21<sup>st</sup> June 1965, the tribes moved stealthily around the Subedar Nazrband collected all the Qaums and addressed them in front of quarter guard. 'Friends and fellow tribesmen tonight we are under attack which can come at any moment. We are sons of Tochi Scouts, Tochi is our tribe, our honour our izzat our ghairat is for the Tochi Scouts, we have to defend this fort at any cost, the gates will be opened only over my dead body'. All four corner watchtowers and posts were manned and Nazr himself positioned over the main gate edges with a Bren gun. Moon was in second quarter and after midnight the first shell of the Dindar's artillery hit the southern wall and fire on the parquets. The artillery duel continued for some time and then came the shadows of tribesmen stalking towards the fort. Effective fire discipline forced the tribesmen to call it a day and at Fajr prayers both ceased fire for prayers. This continued for another three days and finally Nazarband resolved to carry out a Gasht and silence the artillery piece which was creating nuisance with a persistent danger of exploding a shell in magazines.

On the morning of 24<sup>th</sup> June 1965 after Fajr prayers Subedar Nazarband came out of the Boya Fort with ten more scouts and before the sunlight occupied the ridge parallel to the fort and from there he sniped at the tribesmen and within an hour cleared the ridge, at this point the tribesmen started firing from the Musa Khan Post direction. The firing volleys were exchanged

till mid day. Subedar Nazr then went all alone to silence the tribesmen lonely machine gun and the artillery piece, he crawled through the stones and Pawani, took a shot at the firing tribesman, hit him on the thigh and his next bullet silenced him. Nazr then signalled his fellow scouts to follow him, which they did and then took the machine gun and retreated towards the Fort. Nazr provided them with cover; on the other side, Havildar Qamar held the fort. Tribesmen were keen bent on getting their machine gun back and to stop the scouts from entering back into the gate. Nazr was the wall between their aims, he was brave to an extent where he stood as rock and ensure that everybody has gone back into safety and then when he himself wanted to come back he was encircled by the tribesmen who made his every move worthy of living. Nazr was hit twice in the chest but he held his nerve and challenged the tribesmen to come out in open, Nazr managed to walk back into the gate but he was bleeding profusely and died same night.

Subedar Nazarband delaying and courageous action gave the important time for the Gasht of seven platoons to reach on the spot. Boy Bridge was saved.

Tribesmen suffered 25 Killed and 12 wounded above all they lost the impetus and soon agreed to a peace pact and paid the fine.

## Kashmir War-1965

During the September War the fear of Para-Troopers reached an epic level. It started accidentally.<sup>6</sup> Brigadier SalimUllah then a major was a grade two officer in the GHQ and on the night of 4/5<sup>th</sup> September while in GHQ a telephone call came which was picked up by the General Musa Khan the army chief, who had come to the Major's office while leaving, the caller informed him about the possible Indian Para Troopers landing near Kharian. A stage reached where all the vehicles moving on Grand Trunk Road were halted and search was made for the Para troopers. People in Rawalpindi and other stations started reporting about the Para troopers. Rumours were in abundance and anybody that had any resemblance with Hindu features was taken to the task. Villagers established their lookout parties. It shows the spirit of the people and also how quickly rumours travel in war.

No.6 Wing was raised in this background in September 1965 with strength of 453 all ranks. Captain Abdul Habib Khan was the first commander. The Wing moved overnight from MiranShah and by early morning was placed around Kharian purely as anti airborne force. The fear of Para troopers subsided after few days and

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Azam, Cheema, Madni, *History of Pakistan Army Aviation*, unpublished draft.

Aviation Archives. Rawalpindi.

Wing was moved few miles towards the east to guard the important railway bridge at Wazirabad, a very correct deployment and use of Scouts. Three platoons (100 men) were detached and attached to Lahore Sector with 11 & 15 Frontier Force Regiments in area DeraChal (Burki). The Wing was later sent to Chamb-Jaurian also, where it remained till November 1965 when Mahsud Scouts relieved.

### **Raising of No.4 Wing**

This Wing existed on papers but in reality it was a Thall Scouts Wing, in September 1965 apart from No.6 Wing, the No.4 Wing was also raised with strength of 716 Scouts. It went through only one month training and was attached with Zulfiqar Force in November 1965. There was minor action going on along the Durand Line, Wing relieved Zhob Militia at Samani. It arrived back at MiranShah in March 1966.

### **Subedar Behram Gul Wazir**

On 11<sup>th</sup> May 1965 the newly raised No.5 Wing under command of Captain Qamar with Subedar Behram Shah as the company commander departed from MiranShah with a fanfare, the Corps band played favourite tunes, two goats were given as 'Sadqa'. Transport was inadequate and so was the equipment. Political Agent made the arrangements for the transport. Convoy moved towards the Bhimber via Bannu- Kohat-

Rawalpindi-Kharian. Wing was placed under command No.4 Sector which further deployed the No.5 Wing in area Bagsar-Patni-Thub & Padhar.<sup>7</sup> The situation at that period was of uncertainty, Operation Gibraltar started in August 1965 in the No.4 Sector. The whole of ceasefire line of 1948 from north till Bhimber was divided into sectors, for instance Sector No.3 was looking after the Murree area. In May 1965 it was principally decided to support the Kashmiris by providing them arms, ammunition and training in Azad Area. No.5 Wing also provided training to the freedom fighters but at that time zeal among Kashmiris was not as much as displayed at the end of millennium. Wings from other Scouts Corps were also inducted in the operation.

No.5 Wing remained deployed till October 1965 and suffered eleven casualties including one subedar, two havildars and ten scouts. It was awarded one Sitara-i-Jurat, two Tamgha-i-Jurat and six Imtiaz-i-Sanads.

Lance Naik Khan Baz Khattak was the first one to embrace shahadat , he was performing duty at Batala Post in Azad Kashmir and died due to Indian small arms fire on 6<sup>th</sup> June 1965, he was the sentry at post. Baz was fired upon and in order to return the fire he had to exposed himself which he did and was hit with two

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Tochi Scouts letter, date not given but year is 1966. Historical Archive, Tochi Museum. MiranShah.

bullets. Baz Khan was born on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1932 at Village Chashmai in Mianwali District and joined Tochi Scouts in January 1950. He left behind a widow and a five years old son.

From August 1965 onwards the sector became hot with artillery duels No 5 Wing was dispersed and utilised to relieve the regular army units from internal security duties. Guards at cantonments, filling the gap between the battalion, protecting the headquarters were their main role. Army aviation flights were dispersed and Tochi Scouts among the Scouts are the only one which had a long association with aircraft. Usually two platoons were employed for these duties. Scouts wore their kameez shalwar (Mazri) uniform. Wing did not had any heavy weapons especially the artillery gun and neither they required it. Scouts were good in patrolling and protecting own lines. By virtue of their light equipment they moved much quicker than the regular army soldiers.

Sepoy Sharbat Ali Bangash was deployed at Bandola Post alongwith his platoon, on the night of 10<sup>th</sup> July 1965, Indian mortar shelling took his life. Sharbat had joined Tochi Scouts at the very young age of seventeen in 1957, he belongs to the Usterzai Village in Kohat District, he was survived by a widow and three minor children.

Bandola Post came under heavy enemy fire in August. It must be kept in mind that no open war was going on between Pakistan & India, these fire duels were part of Operation Gibraltar. There were two important posts, Batala and Ghauri. Tochi Scouts one platoon was deployed at Batala and remaining company was task to capture the Ghauri. All casualties took place in these two posts.

### **Ghauri Post**

On the night of 15<sup>th</sup> August 1965 Tochi Scouts were ordered to capture Ghauri Post. Post was well defended, on a high ground with anti person mines all around. Naib Subedar Behram Gul Wazir led this attack. Tochi Scouts moved out at latter part of night with an aim to offer Fajr prayers at the captured post. H-hour was 2359, post was engaged by own artillery and mortars throughout the day. Indian Post after coming under attack made desperate attempts to hold back the attack and it looked as they might pull off the attack.

In this action Sepoy Imam Ghulam Orakzai was awarded Tamgha-i-Jurat (posthumous) for his act of valour, he rushed towards the gate of the post through the mine field and lost his life in the act. He was born in 1932 at Tarangai a small village in Kohat District, a well disciplined soldier who had joined Tochi Scouts in 1948. He left behind a widow and his only child a daughter was born after his shahadat.



Post was captured and Indians now attacked the post with an aim to retake it, two such attacks were blunted. In order to retain the initiative aggressive patrolling was required and carried out. Sepoy Wazir Mohammad Bangash a young eighteen years old scout who had married a month before, he was killed on 17<sup>th</sup> August while defending the Ghauri Post; he was hit by a stray bullet. This post was attacked frequently by the Indians mostly through artillery. Sepoy Safdar Khan Mohmand also embraced shahadat on 21<sup>st</sup> August 1965 at this post due to medium artillery fire.

On 1<sup>st</sup> September Operation Grand Slam was launched by the Pakistan Army. Subedar Behram was deployed at Padhar and he witnessed the first aerial dog fight between PAF and the Indian Air Force in which IAF lost four aircraft. Padhar is a flat ground but broken. Subedar Behram Shah also indirectly helped the Lieutenant Colonel NaseerUlah Babar's capture of Sikh company same very day. On the same day Havildar Gul Rehman Orakzai a cheerful and hardworking scout with lot of guts and stamina was hit by an enemy artillery shell while he was standing in his trench. He left behind a widow and two daughters. Gul Rehman was born in Labi Khel Village in District Kohat, he became a scout in June 1949.

Sepoy Libas Khan Bangash was part of one such patrol which came under enemy fire on the night of 2/3 September when Operation Grand Slam had started, one

mortar shell exploded close to him and he laid his life for the motherland. He had only two years of service. He was born on 16<sup>th</sup> December 1946 at Village Nasrat Khel in Kohat District.

Sepoy Sardar Khan Afridi who hailed from Village Vochawana near Jamrud also embraced shahadat in similar pattern while carrying out patrolling on the night of 5<sup>th</sup> September 1965. He was a dashing soldier who became a Tochiet on 24<sup>th</sup> April 1954 when he was only seventeen years old. Sardar was always a volunteer for anything which involves exposing himself to danger, he enjoyed danger. He left behind a widow, two sons and a daughter.

On 6<sup>th</sup> September when all-out war broke out, a fighting patrol was sent from Ghauri Post to gather information. 14 Azad Kashmir Infantry Battalion was in the process of attacking an adjoining hill known as Hill Observation Post.

Near Point 665, Tochi Scouts had their first check point and from hence on they stalked and found the Indian heavy machine gun which was holding the advance. Behram Shah with presence of mind and displaying a superior degree of leadership, stalked and there is no stalker better than a Tochi Scout, years of hard scouting in the mountains have made them almost perfect in this art. Behram with three scouts moved from left of the Indian machine gun and other four from the

other side with remaining holding the position and ready to act as reserve. Havildar Azam Khan Khattak spotted the Indian machine gun, crawled towards it and silenced it with two hand grenades, he himself was wounded and succumbed to his injuries. He was awarded Tamgah-i-Jurat (posthumous). Sepoy Raza Khan Khattak was hit with a burst of machine gun before it was silenced, Sepoy Fazal Manan Orakzai was also with Raza and he also received bullets from the same machine gun; both died. Thus Havildar Azam Khan's action is to be seen in the light of damage which this machine gun was causing. Naib Subedar Behram Khan knew that as long as the machine gun is firing and remains intact the life of his undercommand will not be safe. He charged, Kartar Singh an Indian Naik had no chance when Behram lunged forward with his bayonet charge, his face contorting in anger and he yelled the Tochi Scouts battle cry 'Da Toro Shrunk'.

'Subedar Behram Khan Wazir, alongwith his platoon attacked an Indian post and captured it by suffering three casualties. On the other hand, Indian losses were 18 killed, six injured and six prisoners including one JCO. In this action the company commander Major Bulran Singh was also killed'.<sup>8</sup>

## Chitral Scouts

Chitral in sixties had a poor communication infra structure, the road between Dir and Chitral fit enough for three ton lorry was closed down from late November to mid-June due to heavy snowfall on the Lowari Top. Only one ton lorry track was available from Chitral-Lowari. There was no road in the state, Mirkani-Dommel Nisar-Arandu, Chitral- Sanoghar, Chitral- Kiring, Chitral- Nagar and Gahiret-Barir were all jeep able tracks in fair weather only. The road Drosh- Madaglasht and Kiring – Garam Chashma were under construction. Chitral was connected with Peshawar by air, flights operating on fixed days. In January 1964 a new corps was raised at Skardu known as **Karakorum Scouts** with headquarters at Skardu, commanded by a major, it was raised to a lieutenant colonel's command on 20<sup>th</sup> September 1965<sup>9</sup>. At raising the half strength of the corps constituted from tribes of Baltistan and other half from Gilgit, Hunza, Nagar, Yasin, Punial and Astore; Chilasis and Gupis were recruited from September 1965 onwards.

Chitral Scouts were bit late in taking part in the 1965 War, the two companies of Chitral Scouts were

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<sup>9</sup>

*Frontier Corps an Introduction*, p-191.

ordered to move to the operational area in the second week of war and by the time these two companies reported at Rawalpindi on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1965 the war was over. These two companies remained deployed at Rawalpindi where the threat of air borne troops from India was a distant reality. Subedar Suleman Khan was the commander of Chitral Scouts contingent, they remained at Rawalpindi till the last week of January 1966.

### **Khyber Rifles**

A contingent of Khyber Rifles took prominent part in the Indo-Pak War 1965. Two companies of Khyber Rifles were sent to Bimber Sector and two more companies went to Titwal Sector in Kashmir. In Titwal Sector the headquarters of both companies was at Chug Pahar, while the scouts occupied Hajira. Sunjawa and Jabri. One of the company was detailed under the command of Major Riaz to cross the Indian Border. They remained in the area for three days and had nearly reached their objectives but due to change in the plan, the company was recalled. During operation, the enemy attacked Khyber Rifles's Mortor Platoon. The platoon was under command of Afridi Subedar Yaqub Khan. The enemy was repulsed with heavy casualties. In this operation Subedar Yaqub Khan showed qualities of

leadership and for his personal bravery he was awarded Sitara-I-Jurat. The troops remained in Kashmir for six months and after the ceasefire were withdrawn to Khyber. Not only a Sitara-I-Jurat was awarded, but the troops were honoured by two Imtiaz Sanads as well. One of the key reason for their success was in the physical fitness which they possessed by virtue of living and operating in mountainous territories.

### **Mahsud Scouts**

Only 2<sup>nd</sup> Mahsud Scouts was employed on the border and were awarded with one Tamgha-i-Basalat { PA 4821 Capatin Sikander Khan} and one President's Commendation Certificate.<sup>10</sup> It was on 18<sup>th</sup> September 1965 when the Mahsud Battlions were formally converted into Mahsud Scouts thus 1<sup>st</sup> Mahsud Battalion became 1<sup>st</sup> Mahsud Scouts and so forth.

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<sup>10</sup> Frontier Corps an introduction, published 1967, pp156-167.